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ABSTRACT

Outlined is a procedure for evaluating early education programs which will produce information useful to the teacher in the classroom, as well as to program development staff involved in refining program practices. Desirable features include "mini-tests" which are easily administered and interpreted by teacher, and will yield feedback relevant to the teacher's daily conduct of the classroom. Of primary importance is an explicit statement of the objectives of the classroom activities, together with a specification of methods for determining progress toward these objectives. There are two aspects to a thorough evaluation paradigm: formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation procedures are on-line measures which provide immediate, corrective feedback to teachers and model developers. Summative evaluation provides information about the model's effect on more generalized dimensions, and evaluation efforts today focus on this type of measure. An early education evaluation model utilizing formative and summative dimensions of data is presented. (RC)

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A PARADIGM FOR EARLY
EDUCATION MODEL EVALUATION

By

Robert K. Denton

This paper outlines a procedure for evaluating early education programs which will produce information useful to the teacher in the classroom, as well as to program development staff involved in refining program practices. Desirable features of such a procedure include "mini-tests" which are easily administered and interpreted by teachers, and yield information which is immediately relevant to the teacher's daily conduct of the classroom. This same information then provides feedback to program developers who are involved in assessing and revising the continuing relevance of the early education model.

Of primary importance in any curriculum paradigm is an explicit statement of the objectives of the classroom activities, together with a specification of methods for determining progress toward these objectives. While general statements are useful in delimiting the broad areas of expected program effects, more specific statements of behaviors expected of successful graduates are essential in describing the program. These objectives are the essential determinants of the content of the evaluation procedures.

There are two aspects to a thorough evaluation paradigm: formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation procedures are on-line measures which provide immediate, corrective feedback to teachers and model developers during the process of implementation. These procedures give the teacher information about the immediate effect of classroom activities on children, so that the pace and direction of same may be adjusted to maximize children's growth. Thus, these procedures are closely related to ongoing classroom content.

In contrast, summative evaluation provides information about the

model's effect on more generalized dimensions. In this category rest the traditional tests of school achievement, as epitomized in the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. These measures are typically considered the final assessment of childrens' growth on a given dimension, and are used in making summary statements about specific children or groups of children. Children are typically graded in terms of their performance on summative tasks, and some are moved on to higher levels of experience, while others are again taken through the learning experiences to improve their performance levels.

Evaluation efforts in education today typically focus on summative measures, partly because of the ease of administration of standard tests, and partly because of the laborious nature of specifying objectives required in a formative model. A truly effective evaluation model must integrate both formative and summative information in a fluid sense so that the information gained about program effectiveness is maximized. A graphic description of this process is given in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here

The small cells along the formative dimension represent information gained by teachers on self-constructed "mini-tests" which reflect the focus of their current class activity. The information is typically collected on a sample of children, and on only a sample of the total classroom activities in the goal area. Through sampling, the validity of the information gained is assured, while the requirements of the information-gathering task are reduced to manageable proportions. At a specified time point, typically the end of a school year, a summative instrument is given to obtain a summary score for children or groups of children.

The selection of a summative test is made in view of the content of items in the formative cycle. In this way, the veridicality of the ongoing classroom activity with outcome evaluation is assured.

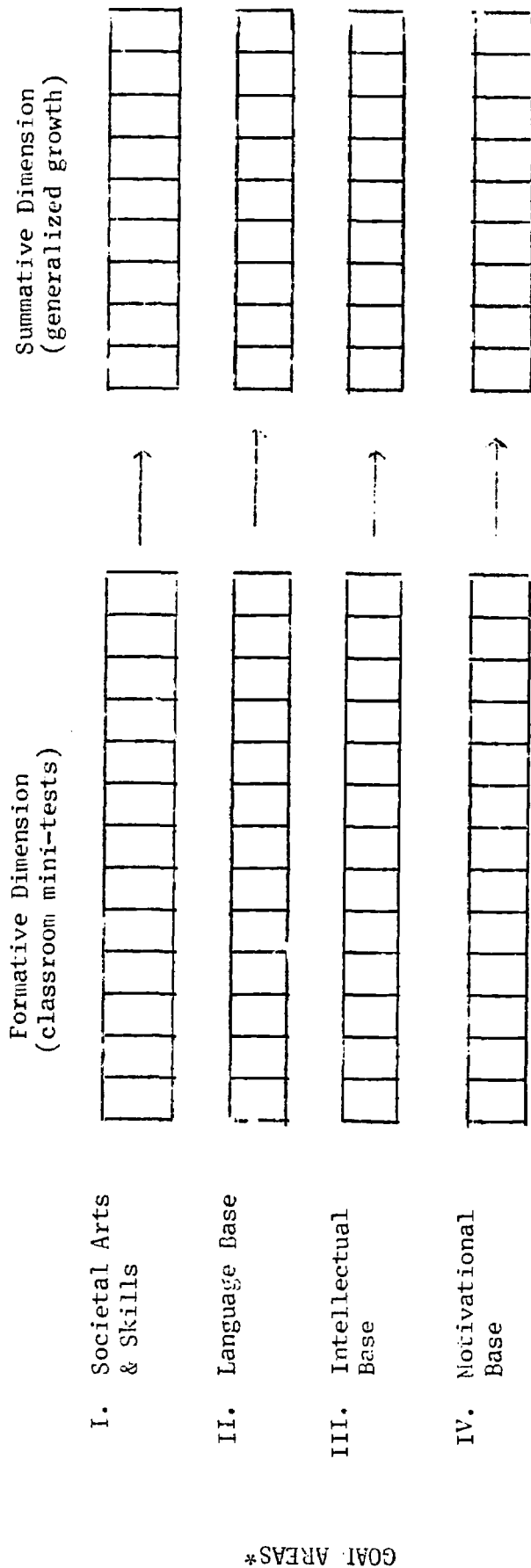
This evaluation model has been evolving through the research and development program at the Arizona Center for Early Childhood Education. Staff at the Center are currently specifying behavioral objectives to fit into the formative cells. This will be followed by a specification of summative tests to reflect ultimate outcome goals for children who have participated in the Tucson Early Education Model.

References

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Figure 1

Early Education Evaluation Model Utilizing Formative and Summative Dimensions of Data



GOAL AREAS*

*These goal areas are taken from the Tucson Early Education Model.

4.
THE END.